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535 *Ikikweta.* This a highly objectionable dance, better not too minutely described. There are four drums and uproarious singing and shouting. The dance is of recent introduction among the Konde, and is held late at night. The chiefs try to put it down, but without much success; and there are other very evil dances, which no decent people will have anything to do with. Such dances usually come like an epidemic, spread rapidly over a whole district, and lead to great moral injury, until they are put down by vigorous chiefs, or die out of themselves, until the epidemic comes round again. Very frequently these evil performances go on the whole night, with terrific noise, and so determined are the dancers, that respectable people are afraid to interfere, lest an unmerciful handling should send them back to their homes bruised and bleeding. But the approach of a white man sends the dancers rushing off to hide in the bush, as I have often found at all hours of the night.

524 Of games of skill the most important is a kind of draughts game, an Arab introduction. Thirty-six holes are made in the ground; the players, two or four in number, have small stones which they move from hole to hole, until one side is declared winner. I do not understand the game, and shall not attempt to describe it; but a very complete description is given in "The Ila-speaking Peoples," by Smith and Dale.

538 A favourite intellectual exercise is the propounding of riddles, of which there is a large stock, and new

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ones are always being added. The following are a few examples: 538

My house has no doors? An egg.

My hen lays her eggs among thorns? A pineapple.

When I returned from my walk, I took the cow by the tail? A long-handled drinking calabash.

By day or by night, by hill or by plain, it is hard work? Walking on slippery ground.

I hoed a large garden, but when I gathered the crop it did not fill my hand? Haircutting.

All my children have red hats? The finger-nails.

It has neither feet to walk with, nor hands to seize with, yet it devours everything? Fire.

The chief's cup is empty? In comparison with the lake, which is always full.

Feet which have no toe-nails? The feet of a table.

The "wisdom of the fathers" is expressed in short pithy parables, of which the following are a few examples:

A familiar road needs no sign-posts.

If one fish (in a basket) rots, they all rot. (Beware of evil company.)

The tongue has no bones. (Beware of talkative people.)

The liar has only a short way to go. (Your sin will find you out.)

Righteousness injures no one.

Little by little, and the cup is filled. (Much dropping wears away stones.)

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538 A hired man eats his own share and that of others. (Be self-reliant.)

The right hand does not cut off the left. (Be consistent.)

There is no blessing in hurry. (Think before you leap.)

If you would get something from under the bed, you must kneel down. (Honour to whom honour is due.)

If you would get honey, you must use fire. (Take the bull by the horns.)

538 522 Tales told to the children, and to adults, are as numerous as proverbs and riddles, or even more so. Many of them have come down the generations, but others are of quite recent origin; those which contain references to Europeans being necessarily late compositions, though in a few cases they may be old stories revised to suit modern conditions. At the concert referred to at the beginning of this chapter, one of the items was a hugely comic account of a native's adventures among Europeans, which quite convulsed the audience, though the white man was not always represented as getting the worst of the situation. The reciter, however, modestly disclaimed authorship, and assured me that he had received it from others. In any case the ability to tell a vivid story, and to show the humorous side of life, was quite striking.

538 These stories cover every aspect of life, and each one has a moral, not always obvious to the European listener, but apparently quite clear to the people

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themselves. They form part of the education of every child, and of the admonitory stock-in-trade of all parents of growing boys and girls. A judge will use one to give point to his decision; a man pleading his case at the native court will illustrate his plea with an apt story. There are men and women whose large stock of tales, and skill in relating them, make them welcome in every gathering; but anyone, on occasion, will tell one.

538

The Tortoise and the Hedgehog

539

Once upon a time, when there was a famine, the Tortoise went to a far country to buy food. He found it in abundance, and made up a load; but on his way home he came upon a tree which had fallen across the path. So he laid down his load on the path, and followed the tree to see how big it was. When he was satisfied, he returned to pick up his load, but found that the Hedgehog had carried it off. Then the Tortoise said, "My friend Hedgehog, why have you taken off my load?" "Your load!" said the Hedgehog. "Why did you leave your load on the path? No, I have beaten you." The Tortoise went at once to the judge, who summoned the Hedgehog; and when he heard the facts he gave judgment for the latter. The judge said to the Tortoise, "You have lost the case. Why did you leave your load on the path? You are a fool." So the Tortoise went home, and the Hedgehog went off with the load of food.

After a long time hunters went out to hunt the

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CHAPTER XIV

The Supreme Being

776 OF the Supreme Being there is little that can be said with certainty beyond that He was believed in prior to the coming of the white man and the teachings of Christianity. The existence of this belief cannot be doubted. Indications of it are found everywhere in the native mind inextricably intertwined with life and thought and language, with prayer and sacrifice, with birth and death, with famine and pestilence and sword. For the rest, there is much confusion. That a developed [779] theology does not exist, hardly needs to be said. What one informant will give as common belief, another will say he never heard of; it belongs, he will tell you, to another district, but it was not the belief of his fathers.

776 Many parables and proverbs, of the pre-European origin of which there can be no doubt, give evidence 538 of the belief in a Supreme Being. "Who mocks at orphans," says an old proverb, "let him beware: God is watching him." "God will judge between us and the white man," a common saying at funerals, is necessarily of recent origin; but there are scores of other sayings which are certainly ancient. Many

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of these are expressed in archaic language, which is not in use at all to-day, except in these and similar sayings. Thus we have, "*Chikulu ku nsi*," the Great One is everywhere; "*Gwende munono*," go where you will (you will hear of God). "*Imbwa yikurwa pa lwigi*," literally means, the dog is fighting at the door, but the actual meaning is, God is within you. Expressions like these are very numerous, and, even in their archaic form, are in common use every day.

The names in use for the Deity give some indication of how He is regarded. The name most commonly used in Konde is *Kyala*, but although it is now almost exclusively used in public worship, in the translation of the Scriptures, and in hymns, it is, perhaps, the weakest of all the Divine names. For it may be applied to persons in whom the Deity dwells, or to men who, though they lived on earth, were yet *Kyala*. The name is sometimes applied to white men, who are dangerous because they are believed to have closer relations with the source of all power than common men have. Other names are *Tenende*, the Owner of all things; *Nkurumuke*, the Undying One; *Chata*, the Originator; *Kyaubiri*, the Unseen; *Kalesi*, He who is everywhere present. The name *Ndorombwike* is the one used on solemn occasions, and comes from the verb *kuteromboka*, to create in a sense in which God only can. *Mperi*, again, is the Maker, applied to God only, though the verb from which it is derived may be applied to men also.

Prayer is addressed directly to the ancestral spirits, who in many cases are conceived as having power of